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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

20 WEST 40th STREET, NEW YORK 18, N. Y.

June 2, 1953

VIA AIRMAIL

Mr. David L. Baugh, President
Vancouver Branch NAACP
4106 East 15th Street
Vancouver, Washington

Dear Mr. Baugh:

Thank you very kindly for your letter of May 13 requesting information on the Association's stand on the McCarren-Walter Immigration Act.

Enclosed is information on Walter White's testimony before the President's Commission on Immigration and Naturalization which sets forth our views in full.

Sincerely yours,

GLOSTER B. CURRENT
Director of Branches

GBC/cs
Enc.

WHITE URGES REVISION OF
U.S. IMMIGRATION LAWS October 2, 1952

NEW YORK, Oct. 2.-- Immediate revision of American immigration and naturalization laws to eliminate all distinctions based on race, language or religion was urged by Walter White, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, at a hearing before the President's Commission on Immigration and Naturalization.

The racially discriminatory immigration policies of this country were a factor in bringing on World War II, Mr. White charged at the opening session of the committee's hearing here on September 30. These policies "aggravated Japanese economic difficulties which stemmed from overpopulation" and "cast a stigma of racial inferiority upon the Japanese and other Orientals," the NAACP leader asserted.

Because of its racial implications, he said, the present McCarran-Walter Act will prove equally harmful to the United States not only in Asia but also in Latin America and in the Caribbean area. Immigration from the West Indies, he testified, has been reduced 90 per cent by this act which has aroused "anger" and "shock" in the islands.

Mr. White cited 25 distinguished persons of West Indian origin who have made "notable contributions to the arts, sciences, business and sports" of America. Among those listed were Alexander Hamilton, Claude McKay, John Russwurm, Jan Matzeliger, Judge James S. Watson, Bert Williams, Canada Lee, Arthur Schomburg and others.

Testimony of Walter White
Secretary, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
Before the President's Commission on Immigration and Naturalization
Federal Courthouse, Foley Square, New York, N. Y.
September 30, 1952

It is undoubtedly superfluous for me to begin my testimony before this distinguished committee by pointing out two important facts. I ask the indulgence of the committee, however, because there are far too many Americans who either do not know the facts or fail to understand their grave significance to the present and future security and welfare of the United States.

The first of these facts is that between two-thirds and three-fourths of the world's population is not white. Not only do men and women of black, brown or yellow skin constitute this overwhelming majority of the population of the world, but in the areas of the world where they live are to be found many, if not most, of the raw materials on which the highly industrialized civilization of the Western World is dependent. These include uranium, manganese, chrome, tungsten, cobalt, tin, rubber, diamonds, bauxite and molybdenum. Should the so-called white Western nations be deprived of these minerals, and should they go into the hands of the Soviet Union, it is most doubtful whether what we call the democracies can long continue to survive.

The second fact which I wish to emphasize is that one of the contributing factors to World War II and one which today lowers American prestige in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and South America is the racially discriminatory immigration laws of the United States, Canada and Australia. Every nation, of course, has the right to determine for itself what its rules and regulations for the admission of immigrants shall be. But when a nation blatantly erects a color bar in its immigration policy, it immediately sows the dragon's teeth of resentment.

As a result of a determined campaign at the beginning of the

Twentieth Century in the United States about the "yellow peril," the Congress enacted so-called oriental exclusion laws which, along with such practices as that of extraterritoriality in Asia, have done irreparable harm all over the world to the prestige of the United States. Particularly since 1921 the indefensible criteria of race, color and national origin have been the principle bases for our immigration policies. These criterion were founded upon doctrines of racial superiority which were popular during the Twenties along with the revival of the Ku Klux Klan after World War I. The basic common sense of the American people soon put an end, temporarily at least, to the Klan's flagrant violation of the principles of American democracy. But this concept of racial superiority has continued to dominate the thinking of many congressmen, as is evidenced by the 1924 immigration law, the one enacted in 1929, and the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952.

The 1924 law excluded Japanese and other Asians from the United States. Japan, like Italy, was sorely plagued by overpopulation and meager natural resources. Italy was permitted to invade Ethiopia and to engage in what proved to be one of the most costly colonial expansion programs of contemporary history which led directly to World War II.

The 1924 American immigration law, the "white Australia" policy of the same period and Canada's exclusion policy not only aggravated Japanese economic difficulties which stemmed from overpopulation but, even more disastrously, cast a stigma of racial inferiority upon the Japanese and other orientals. The drive of Japan into Manchuria and later into the South Pacific was largely caused by her need to find an outlet for a constantly increasingly surplus population.

But even more harmful to world security was the emotional drive--hatred of the white world--which dominated not only Japanese military policy but the thinking of Asians generally who bitterly resented the

gratuitous insult of exclusion based solely upon color.

I submit that the McCarran-Walter Act, because of its racial implications against colored peoples from Asia, the Caribbean and other areas, may well prove equally harmful to the United States not only in Asia but in Latin America. It is true that there has been some slight modification of restrictions against Japanese. But the basic evil of the color bar remains not only uncorrected but in some regards worse than it was before the McCarran-Walter Act was passed over President Truman's veto.

It is my understanding that the visa division of the State Department drafted those sections of the McCarran-Walter Act which cuts to one-tenth or less the number of dark-skinned human beings who may be admitted to the United States. If it be true that the State Department is responsible for these provisions, they constitute an act which contradicts all of the protestations by the State Department regarding human dignity and human freedom. They constitute as well a contradiction of all of our nation's support of a human rights declaration and covenant in the United Nations.

Let me illustrate this specifically. During the past two months in the British West Indies I have seen the terrible consequences of colonial exploitation. In the island of Jamaica, for example, white European nations have ruled for the past 290 years. The cream of the wealth of Jamaica and other West Indian islands have been siphoned off through the colonial system for the benefit of absentee landlords in Europe and, to a lesser degree, in the United States. Most of the profits from sugar, rum, coffee, tobacco, citrus fruits and other products have gone to the colonial powers while the living standards of the native population have sunk lower and lower. Today in Jamaica 1,500,000 persons, of whom 98% are of Negro or Indian blood, are forced, through no choice of their own, to live at incredibly substandard levels. Wages averaging fifty cents a

a day have continued while prices have trebled since World War II.

Your committee and the people of America may correctly retort that the United States as a whole is not responsible for these conditions and is not therefore obligated to be concerned about them. I venture to disagree most vigorously with any such opinion. If for no other reason, the justly celebrated humanitarianism of our nation should compel us to be concerned. But if one chooses not to be concerned for reasons of human decency, there is another and very practical reason for being aware of what is happening in the Caribbean.

A distinguished authority on Latin American affairs, who, because of his official position, wishes to remain anonymous, put this in capsule form recently when I sought his assistance in gathering material for this hearing:

> "The importance of the Caribbean area as a major segment of the Western Hemisphere, and specifically as the gateway to the Panama Canal, must be obvious to all," he stated. "We are learning to our sorrow in Asia that the good will of peoples is essential to the effective cooperation of their governments. The degree of friendliness of the Caribbean community toward the United States is to be attributed in large part to the people from those areas who have been welcomed in the United States and have prospered here. The closing of the door of immigration is the one obvious gesture of hostility toward the entire area which can quickly destroy all the goodwill that has been built up."

I encountered in the West Indies this summer many examples of anger mixed with shock at both the sharp reduction of immigration from certain West Indian islands and the racial implications of that action. Prior to enactment of the McCarran-Walter Act immigration to the United States from the British West Indies was included in Great Britain's annual quota of 65,000.

For many years the United Kingdom has used only half or less than half of its 65,000 quota. From Jamaica there has come during recent years approximately 1,000 persons annually. The McCarran-Walter Act

reduces that number to "not to exceed 100 persons annually." Thereby in one fell swoop the hope of many Jamaicans and others from British, French and Dutch West Indian possessions of escape from economic bondage has been destroyed. That hope has been replaced by justified resentment that the exclusion is based primarily on skin color.

This inexplicable cruelty is matched only by its blindness. Our nation has grown to its present great power and prestige because the peoples of the world have come to our shores to make their contributions towards the building of a great civilization. Among those who have helped to make our nation strong are not only agricultural and industrial workers from the West Indies but those who have made notable contributions to the arts, sciences, business and sports.

Under the McCarran-Walter Act the great Alexander Hamilton, born in Nevis, might not have been allowed to come to the United States.

Here are some other distinguished Americans who were either born in the West Indies or are of West Indian descent:

1. Bert Williams, believed by many to be the greatest of comedians.
2. Claude McKay, famous poet and novelist.
3. The late Judge James S. Watson, New York Civil Service Commissioner.
4. Prince Hall, founder of colored Masonry.
5. Peter Ogden, founder of colored Odd Fellows
6. John Russwurm, first Negro college graduate and publisher of the first Negro newspaper in the United States.
7. Hazel Scott, famous pianist.
8. Jan Matzeliger, inventor of the lasting machine which revolutionized the shoe industry.
9. Roy Campanella of the Brooklyn Dodgers, considered by many to be today's greatest catcher.

10. Lester B. Granger, executive director, National Urban League
11. Ashley Totten, secretary-treasurer, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.
12. Dean Dixon, distinguished orchestra conductor and composer.
13. Jersey Joe Walcott, until last week, world's heavyweight champion.
14. Sidney Poitier, famous moving picture actor.
15. Edward Margetson, composer.
16. Bishop C. C. Alleyne of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.
17. The late Dr. William H. Crogman, university president.
18. A. A. Austin, real estate broker.
19. The late Canada Lee, actor.
20. Arthur A. Schomburg, creater of the Schomburg collection.
21. James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson.
22. William Stanley Braithwaite, critic and anthologist.
23. Mabel Keaton Staupers, Spingarn Medallist and former president of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses.
24. P.H.M. Savory, physician and co-owner of the New York Amsterdam News.

These men and women, along with many others of West Indian descent have made notable contributions to the building of our nation.

Both with respect to a more just and sane immigration policy, free of dangerous racial connotations, I recommend strongly to your committee that it urge immediate revision of our immigration and naturalization laws to eliminate all distinctions based on race, sex, language or religion.

Particularly do I recommend that so-called colonial areas

be not penalized for having been the victims of centuries of colonial and racial discrimination. Immigration from colonies and from trust and non-self-governing territories should be included in the quotas of nations like the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and others which administer these colonies, trusts and non-self-governing territories.

Until this is done, all our talk bout "good neighbor policy" is as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.